

No-dig experiment



In the garden you may notice an area with rows of flowers with woodchip paths between them.

This is our No-dig experiment

No Dig means reducing the amount you turn the soil. As you can see from the photos, a layer of cardboard and layer of mulch/compost was put on top

of the untouched soil to suppress the weeds - we had a lot of brambles and thistles to contend with!



This layer on the surface allows worms and soil biology to do the cultivation for you underneath. The soil is undisturbed so its organisms can work and multiply.



The organisms are fed with the organic matter on the surface, as happens in nature, albeit speeded up a bit as this layer has already rotted down.

Each year we will add another level of rotted material from the compost. We will produce plenty of that from the garden.



Some seeds were slow to germinate, although this may have been the wet weather, and some plants are smaller/weaker than expected.

Weeds have been minimal considering what's underneath. We quickly removed the tops of any coming through and these should be weakened and disappear completely.

What's been great is having the opportunity to try different approaches to gardening.

We will continue to monitor the progress and keep you updated.

You can find lots of information about the No Dig approach online.

Extract from [RHS website](#): 'No-dig' usually involves growing crops in beds that can be reached from narrow (say 45cm/18in) paths each side. Usually the beds are not trodden on, but in fact they support the weight of a gardener's foot because the structure has not been damaged by digging. Soil organisms, when fed by surface mulches of organic matter, create a crumb structure within a firm soil. Firm is not the same as compacted.

Beds may be raised or on the flat. On the flat is better where the soil is sandy and in low-rainfall areas: sandy soil has little inherent fertility or ability to hold moisture, therefore it also needs extra organic matter. [Raised beds](#) are especially valuable in wet districts, on poorly drained soils, and if it is important to avoid back strain.

In a no-dig regime, weeds are controlled by shallow hoeing, hand weeding, contact weedkillers and mulching. Debris is gathered up rather than dug in. Mulches are taken into the soil by soil organisms, and fertilisers are washed in by rain. Mulches also take the place of earthing-up for potatoes, and seeds are sown shallowly and transplants eased in with minimal disturbance.

Because there is little disturbance of the soil, no weed seeds are brought up, and once those near the surface have germinated, weed problems decline. The absence of the clods produced by digging reduces cover for slugs. No-dig gardening is well worth trying, and it is often essential for less-fit gardeners, or those with heavy, intractable soils.